

# Detroit Excellence

*A Quarterly Newsletter for Employees, Volunteers and Patients of the Detroit VA Healthcare System*



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

July/August/September 2014

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[vhadetpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhadetpublicaffairs@va.gov)

## Detroit VA Healthcare System Holds Veteran Town Hall/Listening Session

As part of a national initiative, the Detroit VA Healthcare System held its first Veteran Town Hall meeting on August 28, 2014, in the medical center auditorium.

"These meetings were mandated by the new Secretary, and we were pleased with the idea," said Dr. Pamela Reeves, Medical Center Director. "Not only were we able to hear from Veterans, but it also gave us a great opportunity to update our Veterans and their family-members on our services and what types of programs we provide."

"We want these to be informative and constructive, but we also want to be able to understand Veterans' concerns," said Dr. Reeves. "So often, questions can be answered quickly and we can steer the patient in the right direction."

Once the first round of meetings were held throughout the nation, Secretary Bob McDonald handed down a mandate that the meetings be held once a quarter in each medical center.

"These meetings will remain listening forums that allow Veterans and stakeholders to be heard in

an open dialogue, that allow us to reaffirm our commitment to VA's mission and I-CARE Values, and that help leaders further identify local challenges and improve facility operations," Secretary McDonald stated in a letter to all employees.

"These are forums for Veterans, VSOs, volunteers and family-members to ask questions, give compliments and let their voices be heard," said Dr. Reeves.



## Message from the Director



Happy fall to all of you, patients, staff and volunteers!

We have had a busy last half of the summer here at the medical center, and we are gearing up for many great initiatives set to kick off this fall.

First, I want to make sure I recognize all staff for their commitment to **I CARE**. Across all of VA, we have initiated a recommitment to these important core values.

What is I CARE? These values — Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence — define our culture and strengthen our dedication to those we serve. They provide a baseline for the standards of behavior expected of all VA employees. They remind us and others that “I CARE”. All of us across this medical center, wear pins to remind us AND our patients, that we are committed to I CARE. Here, our Program Support Assistant in the Director’s Office, Donna Bennett, shows her pin which she wears proudly! Thank you Donna!



Staff across the nation have begun to settle into what many are calling a ‘New VA’, under the leadership of Secretary Bob McDonald.

Here in Detroit, we have introduced a few new programs, one of which is our quarterly Town Hall for Veterans and their families.

We held our first session on August 28th in our lower level auditorium and I’m happy to say we had a very good turnout. I was pleased that our service chiefs were able to answer many of the questions that were raised and clear up some confusion on services and programs, and those we couldn’t get to, we contacted directly and addressed the issues.

We will hold one of these sessions each quarter, so please keep an eye out for dates and times. But, know that you don’t have to wait for a town hall session to present your questions or issues. Our patient advocates are available, and you can also email your questions to our Public Affairs Officers and they will direct the questions to the proper person who can address it, [vhadetpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhadetpublicaffairs@va.gov). We are here for you!

As I always like to say, thank you for your service, and thank you for allowing us to serve you!

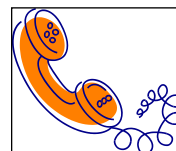
*Dr. Pamela Reeves*  
Medical Center Director



### How do I call the Detroit VA?

The Telephone Call Center here at the Detroit VAMC can assist with appointment management, prescription refills and medical questions or concerns.

Members of our call center staff are available Monday—Friday, 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m., 313-576-1051 or 800-511-8056.



### Follow the Detroit VA Healthcare System on Facebook and Twitter!



## MARK your Calendars! Help us observe Veterans Day 2014

### **HONOR OUR VETERANS!**

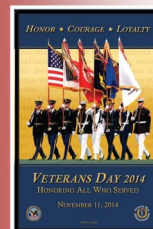
JOIN DETROIT VA HEALTHCARE  
SYSTEM STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS AS  
WE OBSERVE

### **VETERANS DAY 2014**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2014

11:00 A.M.— NOON

MEDICAL CENTER ATRIUM,  
1ST FLOOR



DO YOU HAVE  
QUESTIONS ABOUT  
CARE AND SERVICES?  
VISIT THE VETERANS  
DAY RESOURCE FAIR,  
B1290,  
9:00 A.M.—2:00 P.M.



## Detroit VA's Clifton Buchanan Named EMS Supervisor of the Year for VA

Each year, VA's Environmental Program Service (EPS) recognizes Environmental Management Service (EMS) professionals who have exemplified or have significantly contributed to providing and maintaining outstanding sustained care for our nation's Veterans.

We are thrilled to recognize a member of the Detroit VA Healthcare System team, **Clifton Buchanan**, who was recently named EMS Supervisor of the Year.

Clifton was recognized at the National Environmental Program Services Conference, held recently in Tampa, Florida.

"Mr. Buchanan exhibits excellent customer service skills and communication with both internal and external customers," his supervisors wrote in his entry essay. "Through his communication skills and efforts, he is able to determine the customer's concern and will either seek resolution to the concern himself or contact the proper person to address the customers concern. Clifton will often go out of his way to help Veterans and their families who are in need of assistance. Clifton is a great Ambassador of Customer Service for the EMS department as well as the Detroit VA Healthcare System."

"I'm extremely proud of Clifton and his entire team," said Annette Walker, Associate Director of the medical center. "He's a great example to all staff when it comes to taking training he receives, mentoring he's part of, and making sure it's put to good use."

Always with an eye on improvement, Clifton has personally coached his peers in the implementation of this Lean Management System and he has been responsible for a total of 17 completed process improvements.



L to R: Roy E. Rush Jr., Asst. Chief, EMS; Annette Walker, Associate Director, Detroit VA; Clifton Buchanan; Russell Moorman, Chief, EMS.



Our congratulations to Detroit VA Healthcare System's Chief of Chaplain Services, **Chaplain Laurie O'Reilly**.

On September 25th, Medical Center Director Dr. Pamela Reeves presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the National Chaplain Center leadership.

According to Michael L. McCoy, Acting Director of the National Chaplain Center, "She has made a national contribution to the spiritual and pastoral care for Veter-



an patients and their loved ones, and also worked to enhance the skills, credentials and professionalism of VA Chaplaincy and the discipline in general."



### **Motorcycle FUN!**

In late July, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 154 and Wolverine Harley-Davidson organized a ride of more than 100 motorcycles to the Detroit VA Healthcare System.

These generous folks delivered gift bags to all of the Veterans in our Community Living Center, and they were able to head outside to check out the motorcycles and continue their visit.

A very generous donation was presented for Recreation Therapy services. The donation will be used toward Recreation



Therapy services with a focus on engaging Veterans in leisure, recreational activities and community outings to promote a healthier and happier lifestyle.

Our thanks to ALL who participated!!

## **Detroit VA Healthcare System Designated at Primary Stroke Center by DEMCA**

Every year, about 700,000 people experience a new or recurrent stroke, which is the nation's third leading cause of death.

On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds and someone dies of a stroke every 3.1 minutes.

Recognizing the importance of Acute Ischemic Stroke (AIS), and the fact that t-PA (the clot buster) needs to be administered within first 3 hours of the start of symptoms of AIS, leadership at both VHA and the Detroit VA Healthcare System have made stroke care a priority.

Our stroke team, led by the ED and Neurology staff has established the infrastructure, personnel and protocols needed to achieve the goal of offering t-PA to AIS victims within 3 hours of symptoms, and in 2012, we were able to attain a VHA designation of VHA PSC (Primary Stroke Center).



To extend the opportunity for timely management with t-PA, to all Veterans in our catchment area, our stroke team was also able to attain the DEMCA (Detroit East medical Control Authority) recognition of the as a Primary Stroke Center.

This recognition is expected to improve access to Veterans who may be candidates for t-PA, who would have ordinarily been taken to surrounding stroke centers.



## Detroit VA CWT Program Receives CARF Accreditation

By: Chris Beard, QM Coordinator

The Detroit VA's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program recently completed its first accreditation survey under the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) standards and received a three-year accreditation status with no recommendations!

Dr. Joy Innis-Johnson and Tammy Littlefield head up the program and have worked extremely hard on its status and advances.

"Achieving this accreditation with no recommendations puts them in the top three percent of CARF facilities nationwide, according to the CARF accreditation letter we received," said Dr. Pamela Reeves, Director of the Detroit VA Healthcare System. "This accreditation achievement speaks to the quality of services provided to our Veterans here at the Detroit VA and the efforts of leadership in this program. I'm very proud of our team!"

Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) is a recovery-oriented, vocational model in the continuum of the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) work restoration services consisting of two components: Transitional Work Experience (TWE) and Homeless Veterans Supported Employment (HVSEP).

As part of the Mental Health Service Line at the Detroit VA, CWT staff members coordinate Veterans' services with other VA programs and providers, as well as services in their communities. The CWT Program works toward continuity of care with other mental health services, such as Inpatient Psychiatric Services, Outpatient Mental Health Clinic, Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP), Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM), Chemical Dependence Program, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Program, Military Sexual Trauma Program, Homeless Program, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), HUD-VASH, and Emergency Services, along with Primary Care and other services available throughout the Medical Center.

Among the many strengths of the CWT program noted in the accreditation report, CARF recognized staff and leadership for their commitment to quality service to Veterans.

According to the report: "On balance, John D. Dingell VA Medical Center-Compensated Work Therapy Program demonstrates a very high commitment to the CARF standards as a method for ensuring quality services to the Veterans it supports. The program's commitment to quality and to the Veterans assisted was strongly evidenced via procedures, practices, and the efforts of employees on behalf of the Veterans. Commitment, passion, mutual respect, and visions for the Veteran's future employment opportunities were apparent and are to be commended. The efforts of VA leadership to support these efforts are also acknowledged."



For additional information on the CWT Program at the Detroit VA Healthcare System, visit our website, <http://www.detroit.va.gov/services/>





## Photo Album





## Retired Chaplain Michael Carr Returns to Detroit VA Healthcare System to Accept Distinguished Award

A familiar face appeared at the Detroit VA Healthcare System in late September to accept a distinguished award.

Dr. Reeves and current Chief of Chaplaincy, Laurie O'Reilly awarded Retired Chaplain Michael Carr the VA Under Secretary's Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy.



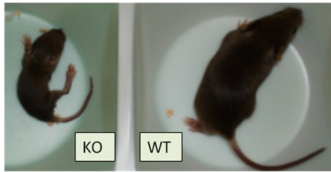
Chaplain Carr has dedicated his career to serving Veterans, their families and loved ones here in the VA. He began his incredible career as a chaplain in 1989 at the Allen Park location and shortly after became Chief of Chaplain Services.

Chaplain Carr played a vital role as Chief Chaplain for both the Detroit and Ann Arbor facilities. For over two decades, Chaplain Carr demonstrated a strong personal effectiveness in serving the Veterans and their families in the Metropolitan area of Detroit and Ann Arbor.

"Even in his retirement, Chaplain Carr continues to assist Veterans and their families," pointed out Dr. Reeves. "He serves as a Commissioner for COMISS which deals with the process of accreditation of Chaplain Departments throughout the U.S. as well as assisting at graveside rites at the National Cemetery in Holly, Michigan. He also provides grief work to families of our Veterans."

"Chaplain Carr retired in 2011, but his work here continues to impact all of us, daily," Dr. Reeves went on to say. "He is committed, creative, effective and always has focused on our patients and their loved ones."

## Detroit VA Researcher Involved in New Study Which Sheds Light on Depression



A distinguished researcher here at the Detroit VA Healthcare System made news recently for his breakthrough in depression treatment.

While today's most commonly prescribed drugs for depression target serotonin — a chemical messenger in the brain — new evidence throws into question the long-standing belief that a deficiency of the substance plays a central role in the debilitating condition.

Dr. Donald Kuhn and colleagues at the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center and Wayne State University School of Medicine note that depression poses a major public health problem. In the late 1980s, the now well-known antidepressant Prozac was introduced. The drug works mainly by increasing the amounts of one substance in the brain — serotonin. So scientists came to believe that boosting levels of the signaling molecule was the key to solving depression. Based on this idea, many other drugs to treat condition entered the picture. But now researchers know that 60 to 70 percent of these patients continue to feel depressed, even while taking the drugs. Kuhn's team set out to study what role, if any, serotonin played in the condition.

To do this, Kuhn and his colleagues developed "knockout" mice that lacked the ability to produce serotonin in their brains. The scientists ran a battery of behavioral tests. Interestingly, the mice were compulsive and extremely aggressive, but didn't show signs of depression-like symptoms. Another surprising finding is that when put under stress, the knockout mice behaved in the same way most of the normal mice did. Also, a subset of the knockout mice responded therapeutically to antidepressant medications in a similar manner to the normal mice. These findings further suggest that serotonin is not a major player in the condition, and different factors must be involved. These results could dramatically alter how the search for new antidepressants moves forward in the future, the researchers conclude.

Congratulations Dr. Kuhn!

*(The authors acknowledge funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences at Wayne State University.) Photo: Wayne State University*

## Two Detroit VA Employees Recognized for Excellence in Care

The Instances of Excellence program stems from a belief that employees must do the right thing the first time, every time.

Introduced in 2013, this program establishes a system of recognizing and celebrating those “Instances of Excellence” in the hope of fostering a culture here at the Detroit VA Healthcare System, that is dedicated to excellence in customer service and patient care.

Two employees were recognized at the quarterly employee town hall meeting on September 25th.

**Donald Jones** was nominated for his work in the following categories: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I CARE). A food service worker, Donald was a great help in recognizing a Veteran who needed immediate help while picking up food trays. The patient became unresponsive during dinner and Donald immediately notified the nurse in that area. As a result, the R.N. was able to assess the patient and get the crash cart just before the patient went into a full code blue. Donald’s quick response to the patient’s medical emergency was critical to the patient’s survival.

**Donald Richardson** is a Psychiatric Nursing Assistant assigned to B-2-North. On July 31st, Donald stopped to speak with a Veteran patient in the PACT A waiting area. The patient said that he was hearing voices and considering suicide. Donald calmly escorted the patient to the R.N. office where an immediate assessment began. Donald was extremely respectful to the Veteran and was instrumental in getting the Veteran the medical attention he required.

Congratulations to both of our winners! THANK YOU for your commitment to Excellence.

*Photos: Top: Medical Center Director, Dr. Pamela Reeves with Instances of Excellence Award Recipient Donald Richardson.*

*Bottom: Medical Center Director Dr. Pamela Reeves with Excellence Award Recipient, Donald Jones.*



## Detroit VA Healthcare System IN THE COMMUNITY!

- Detroit VA Healthcare System will participate in this year’s Veterans Day Parade, Nov 8th at 11:00 a.m. The 9th Annual Detroit Veterans Day parade will begin at the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 9, 2951 on Woodward and conclude with a ceremony at Comerica Park commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Employees and patients are invited and encouraged to join! If you are interested in participating, please contact Bill Browning, Chief, Volunteer and Community Relations at (313) 576-3332.
- Detroit VA Healthcare System will take part in the Veterans Expo, November 7 and 8 at Cobo Center, hosted by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA). The Veteran Expos will offer a one-stop shop for Veterans to learn more about available services and resources in areas like housing, recreational opportunities, family support and more, and will serve as an opportunity for community organizations to reach out and honor Veterans. For more information, contact MVAA at 800-MICH-VET or visit [www.MichiganVeterans.com](http://www.MichiganVeterans.com).

